

OBITUARY NOTICES OF FELLOWS DECEASED.

DR. PARKINSON was born in 1823 near Keighley, in Yorkshire, and died in 1889 at his residence in Cambridge.

His father died when he was a boy, and left to the widow the difficult task of bringing up a large family on a very narrow income. Coming up to Cambridge in October, 1841, he began his college life with an examination for a sizarship. One of his competitors, who sat just in front of him at this examination, still remembers with wonder how he finished his papers long before the others, and how he sat at his ease with his back against the wall for a long time. The success with which he thus began his college life was due to his own energy and talent, for as a boy he had but limited opportunities for study, and the same energy carried him on successfully throughout his life.

As a lad without independent means, it was necessary for him to succeed, and accordingly he prepared to do his best at the final University examination. He had most formidable competitors, and the contest therefore excited considerable interest at the time. It was a very different thing from his first skirmish for the sizarship, and it was only after a hard fight that the Johnian was declared to be the Senior Wrangler. The scene is described in a lively manner by a contemporary, an American who resided for five years in an English University. Such descriptions are outside the object of the present memoir, but it helps us to understand the skill of the competitors to learn that the Senior Wrangler did more than two-thirds of the problems set in all the three problem papers. Such at least was the current report of the day.

The Smith's Prize examination was at that time so arranged that the element of speed did not enter into it to the same extent as into the Tripos. The subjects of examination were in general beyond the reach of ordinary undergraduates. Here the places were reversed, and Parkinson stood second in the list. The contest, however, was well sustained, for in one paper the two first competitors obtained respectively 63 and 55 per cent. of the marks.

As soon as he had taken his degree he devoted himself to an academical life. He had begun to take pupils even before his degree, and now continued to do so with great success. Three of his pupils, viz., Besant, Sprague, and Finch, were the Senior Wranglers in the years 1850, 1853, and 1857; another pupil, the Right Hon. L. H. Courtney, M.P., now Chairman of Committees and Deputy Speaker, was second in 1855. In 1864 he was appointed to be College Tutor. It was here he

found his real vocation in life, and worked at it until 1882. He looked after his pupils in a business-like way, with mingled firmness and kindness, and they reciprocated by giving him their confidence. Some of them have afterwards described how kindly he had assisted them with means, and by his influence started them successfully on their journey through life. His remembrance of his pupils did not come to an end when they had passed from his care, but he and they remained ever mutual friends. In this way he became well known outside the University, his name and influence attracting many students to his College. When he married in 1871, he expected, as the custom then was, that he would lose both his fellowship and tutorship. But the College would not part with so valuable a tutor. The Master and Seniors requested him to continue in his office of tutor though residing in his own house. This was a compliment of which he was justly proud. He continued to act as tutor for eleven more years, and was then elected a second time to a fellowship in his College. He, however, did not retain the dividends of this office, but of his own free will gave them up to the College. Later on he gave £500 for the Church at Walworth, as this is the College mission belonging to St. John's, not the only gift of his to this district.

Dr. Parkinson took his B.D. degree in 1855, and became Doctor of Divinity in 1869. He acted as curate shortly after his degree in a neighbouring village, but the pressure of his other duties prevented him from taking much more active work. He was on the Commission of the Peace for the borough for several years. He was elected a Member of the Cambridge Philosophical Society in 1845, a Member of the Royal Astronomical Society in 1853, and a Fellow of the Royal Society in 1870. He married Miss Whateley, of Edgbaston Hall, in 1871.

Dr. Parkinson was not a writer of many books. His treatises on Elementary Mechanics and on Optics were published while engaged in tuition. They do not contain any novelties, but were written because experience had shown him that students had found difficulties in these subjects, which he thought he could remove. Their commercial success is therefore a good test of their excellence, and of this there can be no doubt. They came into general use in the University, and for several years they were very generally read. They each passed through several editions. They have, however, now been superseded by newer books with methods more adapted to the wants of the present day.

Dr. Parkinson took a prominent part in University affairs. He was Examiner for the Mathematical Tripos in 1849, and Moderator in 1852. He served as Senior Proctor in 1864. He was a Member of many syndicates appointed to consider weighty questions as they arose. For example, he served on the important syndicate which

in 1867 enlarged the scope of the Mathematical Tripos. For three successive periods of four years each, beginning in 1866, he was elected a Member of the Council of the Senate, his popularity in the University being shown by the large majorities by which he headed the poll at each of his two re-elections. He was one of the first appointed Members of the General Board of Studies constituted by the Statutes of 1882. He was also elected by the "Colleges in common" in 1882, and on the expiration of his period of service again in 1886 as one of their first representatives on the Financial Board of the University. He was a Member, and for the most part Chairman, of the Board of Examination from its establishment in 1873 till within a few months of his death, when failing health compelled him to resign this and other offices, the duties of which he felt himself no longer able to discharge.

In his public capacity his wise and prudent counsels, his able administration and management, his thoroughness and directness of purpose, were universally recognised. In his private capacity a wide circle of friends will long remember his genial heartiness, his constant and kindly thoughtfulness.

E. J. R.